



## PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

This is the inaugural issue of *Montana Public Health*, a publication of the Public Health and Safety Division in the Department of Public Health and Human Services. The purpose of this publication is to provide pertinent information about public health prevention opportunities and recommendations about interventions needed to capture these opportunities. The publication is intended primarily for health department workers and health care providers across the state, but we hope that many other Montanans will also find the content useful.

Recently an important report, “Major Prevention Opportunities to Improve Health in Montana”, was released. This issue of *Montana Public Health* will highlight the contents of that report.

### MAJOR PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

Public health programs were associated with dramatic improvements in health status in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

For example:

- No case of measles or of congenital rubella syndrome has been reported in Montana since 1990.
- The infant mortality rate (deaths within the first year of life per 1000 live births) decreased from 22 for whites and 28 for American Indians in 1980 to 5 for whites and 10 for American Indians in 2003.

In recent decades new challenges have emerged. Many of these challenges provide prevention opportunities for which evidence exists that meaningful interventions can be applied.

For example:

- The percentage of babies with low birth weight (LBW) increased from 5.9% in 1995 to 7.7% in 2003. A major risk factor for LBW is smoking in pregnancy. The rate of smoking in pregnancy in Montana is among the highest in the U.S. (Figure 1).
- Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for a wide variety of premature and preventable health problems. The percentage of Montana adults who were obese doubled from 1990 to 2003 (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Smoking in pregnancy by Montana women, 2003

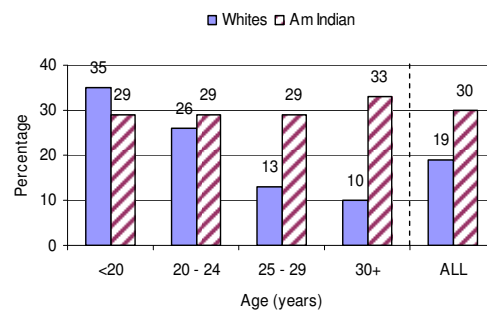
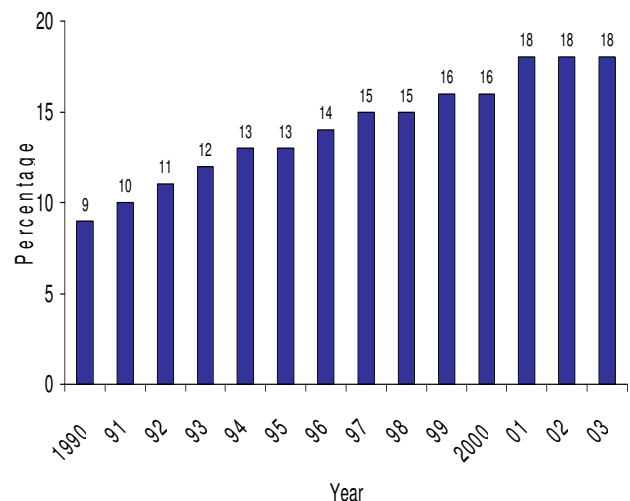


Figure 2: Percent of adults who were obese, Montana, 1990-2003



## EXAMPLES OF MAJOR PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES IN MONTANA

The following table provides examples of prevention opportunities and interventions that need to be applied to improve the health of Montanans.\*

Target Group	Prevention Opportunity	Intervention
Pregnant Women	Smoking in pregnancy Drinking in pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide smoking cessation counseling and treatment, especially for teens and all American Indian women</li><li>• Provide substance abuse counseling and treatment</li></ul>
Adolescents and young adults (aged 14 to 44)	Unintentional injuries Overweight/obesity Tobacco use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enforce graduated driver's license law</li><li>• Empower parents to set rules for young drivers</li><li>• Promote primary seat belt law</li><li>• Provide programs to decrease drinking/driving</li><li>• Provide substance abuse counseling</li><li>• Promote use of helmets by rider of cycles and horses</li><li>• Establish and promote efforts to increase physical activity and improve diet choices</li><li>• Increase tobacco use prevention and cessation programs</li></ul>
Adults (aged 45 to 64)	Cancer Heart disease Diabetes Overweight/obesity Tobacco use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase early detection of cancer to decrease morbidity</li><li>• Establish and promote efforts to increase physical activity and improve diet choices</li><li>• Promote efforts to improve care for cancer and cardiovascular disease</li><li>• Increase tobacco use cessation efforts</li></ul>
Public Health System	Need improved surveillance systems to measure public health improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish morbidity surveillance for injuries</li><li>• Implement an injury prevention program to apply public health interventions to both unintentional and intentional injuries</li></ul>

This list highlights just some of the prevention opportunities that need to be pursued. Go to [www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD) to see the complete report.

NOTE: The next issue of *Montana Public Health* will describe control of influenza and include recommendations for providing influenza vaccine in 2006-2007.



1400 Broadway  
Helena MT 59620-2951

Joan Miles, MS, JD, Director, DPHHS  
Steven Helgerson, MD, MPH, State Medical Officer  
Jane Smilie, MPH, Public Health & Safety Division Administrator